

animated symbols and may include sound. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, the duration of the celebration graphic may be programmed by the manufacturer or casino operator. Additionally, the values of the winning combinations may be categorized into various levels by the manufacturer or casino operator, wherein each level may comprise a range of values. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, an infinite number of categorizations is possible.

[0026] In one embodiment, the payout values of the winning combinations are categorized into five different levels. Referring to FIG. 3, a table illustrating the five different levels of payout values is shown. Level one includes winning combinations having payout values ranging from 1 to 10 credits. Level two includes winning combinations having payout values ranging from 11 to 24 credits. Level three includes winning combinations having payout values ranging from 25 to 49 credits. Level four includes winning combinations having payout values ranging from 50-99 credits. Level five includes winning combinations having payout values ranging from 100 credits to a predetermined maximum number of credits. A particular celebration graphic and the duration of its display are associated with each level. For example, a winning outcome worth 2 credits corresponds to a "level one" win. Accordingly, for a level one win, a simple "one symbol" celebration graphic is displayed for one second. As seen in the table shown in FIG. 3, the celebration graphics vary according to the level of the winning outcome. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, multiple configurations for winning outcome levels are possible. The table shown in FIG. 3 is merely illustrative and does not serve to limit the levels of payout values to the ranges specified in the example.

[0027] In another embodiment, the winning combination payout values are categorized into nine different levels. Referring to FIG. 4, a table illustrating the nine different levels is shown. A particular celebration graphic and the duration of its display are associated with each level. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, any number of levels may be defined and the table shown in FIG. 4 does not serve to limit the levels of payout values to the ranges specified in the example.

[0028] In one embodiment, the celebration graphics are in the form of substitution symbols. For example, when a symbol on the gaming machine display is part of a winning combination, the symbol is substituted with an animated symbol to denote a win. Referring now to FIG. 5, various symbols in a video reel game are shown on the display 51a. In this particular example, when a red "7" symbol (not shown in color in FIG. 5) is part of a winning combination, the red "7" symbol "changes" into an animated "7" with a blazing fire surrounding the number. In other words, the red "7" symbol is substituted with an animated symbol having fire that appears to blaze. In one embodiment, the amount of time the animated symbol is displayed depends on the value of the win. In another embodiment, the content of the animated symbol depends on the value of the win.

[0029] Referring back to FIG. 5, a winning line 71 is shown in the display 51a. In this example, the winning line 71 is a small win and as a result the red "7" symbol 60 is substituted with an animated symbol 61 having a "small fire" surrounding the number "7" (as shown in display 51b). In the display 52a, a winning line 72 having two red "7"

symbols 60 is shown. In display 52b, each of the red "7" symbols 60 have been substituted with an animated symbol 62. Since the winning line 72 is worth more than the winning line 71, each of the animated symbols 62 have animated fire larger than the animated fire in the animated symbol 61. Additionally, the display 53a shows a winning line 73 having three red "7" symbols 60. The winning line 73 is a "big win" and as a result each red "7" symbol 60 in winning line 73 is substituted with an animated "7" 63 having a big blazing fire, as shown in display 53b. A table 54 showing blown-up versions of animated symbols 61, 62 and 63 is provided in FIG. 5. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, the types of animated graphics used as substitution symbols will vary according to the needs of the game.

[0030] In one embodiment the win values are divided into various levels and each level is associated with a particular celebration graphic. For example, when a first level win (the smallest win) occurs, a red "7" is substituted with an animated blazing "7" for one second. The animated figure appears to burn for the one second it is displayed on the screen. For a second level win, the red "7" is again substituted with an animated blazing "7", but is displayed for two seconds. For a third level win, a red "7" is substituted with an animated blazing "7". However, in the celebration graphic associated with a third level win, the fire surrounding the "7" blazes higher and more fiercely than the fire shown for the lower level wins. Additionally, the blazing fire is displayed for three seconds. For a fourth level win, one or more red "7"s are substituted with an animated blazing "7" for at least three seconds. For the highest level win, one or more red "7"s are substituted with an animated blazing "7" and then the entire screen turns into a raging inferno and fire engine sounds are heard. In an alternate embodiment, sound accompanies the display of the animated blazing "7" for any level win. Optionally, the sound may simulate the sounds of a fire blazing.

[0031] In another embodiment, the features of the celebration graphic are based upon two factors such as the winning combination and the amount of the player's wager. For instance, a small winning combination and a small wager result in a short and simple celebration graphic. If the winning combination has a small value, but the player has made a maximum bet, the celebration graphic may be longer in duration and more complex. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, the factors that affect the duration and complexity of the celebration graphic may be determined and configured by the manufacturer or casino operator.

[0032] In an alternative embodiment, the celebration graphic is an interactive celebration graphic. The celebration graphic may include player data such as, but not limited to, player name, player birthday, or an image of the player. In an optional embodiment, the interactive celebration graphic may include a character or other animated graphic announcing the player's name. Alternatively, a banner may display the player's name. In another embodiment, the player's data may be obtained when the player inserts a player tracking card into the gaming machine. Optionally, the player data may be obtained when a player inputs biographical data into the gaming machine. In yet another embodiment, the gaming machine may include a camera to capture an image of the player. This image may then be incorporated into the celebration graphic.